

Method and Apparatus for Framing Greeting Cards

DESCRIPTION

Technical Field

[Para 1] The present invention relates generally to framing equipment and supplies, such as would be used to frame works of art. Specifically, the present invention relates to an apparatus for facilitating the framing of greeting cards for display and preservation.

Description of Related Art

[Para 2] Framing is a common method of decoratively displaying, as well as preserving, a document, photograph, or work of art. A paper product, such as a watercolor painting, photograph, or document, is typically framed in the following manner: The work (e.g., photograph, document, etc.) is generally mounted behind one or more semi-rigid mats, such that the portion of work to be displayed shows through the opening(s) in the mat(s). The matted work is then sandwiched between a pane of glass and a mount board or backing. This layered set of materials is placed within a frame, which fixes the relative lateral positions of the layered materials with respect to each other. Finally, some form of attachment means is utilized to attach the mount board to the frame such that the mount board prevents the framed materials from falling out of the frame.

[Para 3] Most existing techniques and apparatus for framing are intended for permanent framing. A watercolor work may be taped to its mat before being framed, for example. The backing or mount board for the frame may be very securely fastened or even covered with a layer of paper or other material that must be destroyed to access the contents of the frame.

[Para 4] While these existing framing techniques are suitable for single-sided works of art such as a single photograph or illustration, they are less

suited for framing more complex works, such as a greeting card. Since a greeting card has both an outside and inside, being shaped generally like a booklet, one wishing to frame a greeting card for display and preservation must typically choose between displaying only the inside or displaying only the outside within the frame, there being no simple manner to access the rest of the card's content without dealing with the complexity of dismantling a more-or-less permanently framed work.

[Para 5] Thus, what is needed is a framing apparatus and technique for its use that allows for relatively simple access to all of the content of a greeting card, while still providing the decorative and protective aspects of traditional framing. The present invention provides a solution to these and other problems, and offers other advantages over previous solutions.

Summary

[Para 6] Accordingly, the present invention provides an apparatus for framing a greeting card in a manner that allows relatively simple access to the entire contents of the card, while still providing protection and a decorative presentation for the card. A preferred embodiment of the present invention includes a first mat, a second mat, and a mount board, each of which is equipped with magnetic surfaces to allow all three pieces to hold together when mounted in a picture frame. The first mat resembles a conventional mat used in framing art. The second mat, which is held in place magnetically to the back of the first mat, contains two vertical slits that are sized to allow a greeting card to be threaded through the slits and thus mounted to the second mat. A self-adhesive magnet is provided for attaching to the card's envelope, and the second mat includes an additional magnetic surface that may be used to attach the card's envelope to the second mat. The mount board is placed behind the second mat and is held in place magnetically to the second mat. A pull tab extends from the front of the mount board to allow the mount board to be readily detached from the second mat to allow access to the card.

[Para 7] The foregoing is a summary and thus contains, by necessity, simplifications, generalizations, and omissions of detail; consequently, those

skilled in the art will appreciate that the summary is illustrative only and is not intended to be in any way limiting. Other aspects, inventive features, and advantages of the present invention, as defined solely by the claims, will become apparent in the non-limiting detailed description set forth below.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[Para 8] The present invention may be better understood, and its numerous objects, features, and advantages made apparent to those skilled in the art by referencing the accompanying drawings, wherein

[Para 9] Figure 1 is a diagram, in isometric projection, of a frame and glass pane used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[Para 10] Figure 2A is a diagram, in isometric projection, of a first mat used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[Para 11] Figure 2B is a diagram, in isometric projection, of the first mat, as mounted within the frame, in a preferred embodiment of the present invention

[Para 12] Figure 3 is a diagram, in isometric projection, of the back of a second mat and a corresponding prepared envelope used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[Para 13] Figure 4 is a diagram, in orthographic projection, of the front of the second mat and exemplary greeting card used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[Para 14] Figure 5 is a diagram, in isometric projection and with hidden edges indicated with dashed lines, of a mount board in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[Para 15] Figure 6 is a diagram, in isometric projection, illustrating the placement of the mount board within the picture frame in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

[Para 16] Figure 7 is a diagram, in isometric projection, providing an exploded view of a preferred embodiment of the present invention, illustrating

the relative placement of the various components when the apparatus is assembled.

Detailed Description

[Para 17] The following is intended to provide a detailed description of an example of the invention and should not be taken to be limiting of the invention itself. Rather, any number of variations may fall within the scope of the invention, which is defined in the claims following the description.

[Para 18] Turning now to the drawings, and in particular to Figure 1, a picture frame 100 used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention is shown in isometric projection. In this preferred embodiment, frame 100 is a 9-inch-by-12-inch antique gold frame, although one of ordinary skill will recognize that frame 100 may be constructed in any of a number of possible sizes and from a number of different materials without limitation and without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention.

[Para 19] Frame 100 is equipped with three feet 102 and a pair of sawtooth hangers 106 arranged so as to allow frame 100 to be hung in either a vertical or a horizontal position. Feet 102 are constructed from some non-marking, impact-absorbing material, such as polyurethane or felt, to prevent damage to either frame 100 or the wall upon which frame 100 is hung in the event that vibration or other outside forces cause frame 100 to move. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, BUMPON polyurethane cylindrical protection products from Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, Inc. (3M) of St. Paul, MN are employed as feet 102. A sheet of ultraviolet-light-resistant (UV-resistant) styrene glass 104 is mounted within frame 100.

[Para 20] Turning now to Figure 2A, a diagram of a first mat 200 to be inserted into frame 100. Mat 200 is constructed from acid-free archival-quality material. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, mat 200 is cut with a beveled edge from a white mat having a black core; this provides a thin black edging around the card, which enhances the appearance of the

card. In this preferred embodiment, mat 200 is cut with a 5¼-inch-by-8¼-inch opening.

[Para 21] The back of mat 200 (i.e., the side not seen when mat 200 and frame 100 are hung) is covered with a magnetic surface 202 constructed from magnetic sheet material or magnetic strips. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, self-adhesive magnetic sheet material is utilized, but is also reinforced with a ¾-inch-wide adhesive transfer tape, such as acid-free ATG adhesive transfer tape, produced by Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, Inc. (3M) of St. Paul, MN. Alternatively, a double-sided transparent tape may be used, such as SCOTCH® Double Sided Tape 665, which is also available from 3M.

[Para 22] As shown in Figure 2B, mat 200 is held in place within frame 100 using metal mounting points 204, which are inserted around the periphery of frame 100. Thus, mat 200 is permanently held within frame 100 with magnetic surface 202 positioned toward the rear of frame 100 in order to allow mat 300, shown in Figure 3, to be attached to mat 200.

[Para 23] Turning now to Figure 3, an isometric projection of mat 300, showing its back side, is provided. Mat 300, like mat 200, is constructed from a sheet of archival-quality acid-free material 302. Rather than having a rectangular opening like mat 200, however, mat 300 includes a pair of 1/8-inch-wide vertical slits 304 and 305, which are each 8½ inches long, so as to accommodate a 5½-inch-by-8½-inch greeting card (so constructed by folding a letter-sized piece of cardstock or other paper in half). Slit 304, in this preferred embodiment, is located 2¼ inches from lateral edge 307 of mat 300, while slit 305 is located 1¾ inches from lateral edge 309 of mat 300.

[Para 24] A magnetic strip 306 extends around the perimeter of mat 300. Strip 306 is used to attach mat 300 to mount board 500 (depicted in Figure 5). Strip 306, like magnetic surface 202 in Figure 2, is reinforced with adhesive transfer tape or double-sided tape. An additional magnetic surface 308 is provided to allow the attachment of an envelope, such as envelope 312, to mat 300. As shown in Figure 3, a self-adhesive magnetic patch 310 is attached to envelope 312. The exposed surface of patch 310 has an opposite magnetic

polarity to magnetic surface 308, which makes magnetic patch 310 magnetically attracted to magnetic surface 308. Envelope 312 can thus be attached to mat 300 by magnetically attaching patch 310 to magnetic surface 308.

[Para 25] Turning now to Figure 4, the front side of mat 300 is depicted in an orthographic projection. A magnetic strip 400 extends around the periphery of mat 300. Strip 400, having an opposite magnetic polarity to that of magnetic surface 202 of mat 200 (Figure 2), is magnetically attracted to magnetic surface 202 to allow mat 300 to be attached to mat 200 when assembling the frame. Strip 400, like magnetic surface 202 in Figure 2, is reinforced with adhesive transfer tape or double-sided tape. Figure 4 shows an exemplary greeting card 402 as displayed on mat 300 by threading through slits 304 and 305 (Figure 3).

[Para 26] Figure 5 is a diagram, in isometric projection, of a mount board 500 used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Mount board 500 forms the back of the assembled frame. In Figure 5, mount board 500 is depicted with the back side of mount board 500 facing upward and with hidden features (from the front side of mount board 500) being drawn using dashed lines. Mount board 500 is constructed from a board 502 of acid-free preservation/archival quality material. A magnetic strip 504 is provided around the periphery of mount board 500 on the front side. Strip 504 has an opposite magnetic polarity to the exposed surface of strip 306 (Figure 3), which allows mount board 500 to attach magnetically to mat 300 when the frame is assembled. Strip 504, like magnetic surface 202 in Figure 2A, is reinforced with adhesive transfer tape or double-sided tape.

[Para 27] A nylon ribbon 506 is attached to the front side of mount board 500 and extends beyond the edge of mount board 500. As shown in Figure 6, when mount board 500 is placed within frame 100, ribbon 506 is exposed. Pulling ribbon 506 allows mount board 500 to be readily detached from mat 300 for removal. This allows a user to easily access mat 300 and the framed greeting card and envelope. Thus, one wishing to view the interior of the card or the envelope accompanying the card may easily remove and mount board

500 by pulling ribbon 506 and easily replace mount board 500 through magnetic attachment.

[Para 28] Figure 7 is an exploded view diagram, in isometric projection, showing the order of assembly of a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Mat 200 is placed within frame 100 and held in with metal points (not shown). Mat 300, to which the greeting card to be framed is attached, is next attached to mat 200 magnetically. Finally, mount board 500 is magnetically attached to mat 300, with ribbon 506 exposed to allow for easy removal of mount 500 when desired.

[Para 29] While particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that, based upon the teachings herein, changes and modifications may be made without departing from this invention and its broader aspects. Therefore, the appended claims are to encompass within their scope all such changes and modifications as are within the true spirit and scope of this invention. Furthermore, it is to be understood that the invention is solely defined by the appended claims. It will be understood by those with skill in the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim element is intended, such intent will be explicitly recited in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such limitation is present. For non-limiting example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims contain usage of the introductory phrases “at least one” and “one or more” to introduce claim elements. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the introduction of a claim element by the indefinite articles “a” or “an” limits any particular claim containing such introduced claim element to inventions containing only one such element, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases “one or more” or “at least one” and indefinite articles such as “a” or “an;” the same holds true for the use in the claims of definite articles.